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NEW YORK CITY DEATH RATE REACHES HISTORIC LOW

Life Expectancy for Women Rises

About 1,000 Fewer People Killed by Smoking in 2006 than in 2002

Biggest Increase in Births Seen in Nearly 20 Years

NEW YORK CITY – January 8, 2008 – The death rate in New York City reached an all-time low in 2006, the Health Department reported today, as the number of deaths fell to 55,391 – down from 57,068 in 2005 and 60,218 in 2001. Mortality declined in eight leading categories, including diabetes, HIV, chronic lung disease and kidney failure. The only leading killer that increased significantly was substance use (up 8%). Heart disease and cancer remained the city's biggest killers, claiming 21,844 lives and 13,116 lives, respectively. The figures come from the latest *Annual Summary of Vital Statistics*, the definitive registry of births and deaths in New York City.

The *Annual Summary*, available online at www.nyc.gov/html/doh/downloads/pdf/vs/2006sum.pdf, also provides new details on New Yorkers' life expectancy. Life expectancy figures – based on 2005 data – show that women's life expectancy rose by 2.5 months, reaching a record 81.3 years. Male life expectancy held steady at 75.7 years in 2005, while overall life expectancy increased from 78.6 years to 78.7 years.

"New Yorkers are living longer, healthier lives," said Dr. Thomas R. Frieden, New York City Health Commissioner, "but too many New Yorkers are still dying from preventable causes. The city's leading causes of premature death can be prevented by quitting smoking, controlling blood pressure and cholesterol, reducing risky sex and using condoms to avoid HIV, and living free of alcohol and drug dependence. We are working with community groups and health providers to help all New Yorkers reach better health."

Leading Causes of Deaths in New York City, 2006

All Ages – 55,391 Deaths total

Under 65 –

Highlights of 2006 Vital Statistics Data

- The number of live births registered in 2006 increased by 2.3% while the infant mortality rate reached an all-time low of 5.9 per 1,000 live births.
- Females born in 2005 have a life expectancy of 81.3 years, a 2.5-month increase from 2004.
- All smoking-related deaths fell by 11.2% between 2002 and 2006, from 8,722 to 7,744.
- Heart disease, cancer and influenza/ pneumonia, in that order, remained the leading causes of death in New York City.

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		<i>Deaths</i>		<i>16,768 Deaths</i>	
Rank	Cause	Deaths	Cause	Deaths	
1	Heart Disease	21,844	Cancer*	4,453	
2	Cancer	13,116	Heart Disease	3,356	
3	Influenza/Pneumonia	2,578	HIV	1,143	
4	Diabetes	1,708	Psychoactive Substances	959	
5	Stroke	1,669	Accidents	613	

*Top cancer killers of people under age 65 are: 1. Lung (892 deaths) 2. Breast (548 deaths) 3. Colon (413 deaths). An estimated 80% of lung cancer cases are caused by smoking.

The report reveals a steady decline in smoking-related deaths, which have fallen by 11% since 2002 (from 8,722 to 7,744 among adults 35 and older). Deaths from smoking-induced cardiovascular diseases including heart attacks and strokes fell by 14% from 2002 to 2006. Fatal lung cancer fell by 8% during the same period, and deaths from chronic airway obstruction declined by 17%. Recent declines in NYC's smoking rate should yield similar benefits in future years. Smoking-related deaths are estimated based on a national methodology published by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; these estimates do not include deaths from exposure to second-hand smoke.

While overall cancer deaths declined among people under 65 in 2006, the toll from colon cancer rose by 17%. Colonoscopy screening can prevent colon cancer deaths by identifying the condition at its earliest, most treatable stages. New York City has dramatically improved its screening rate in recent years – 60% of adults over 50 had received colonoscopies when surveyed last year, up from 52% in 2004 – but colon cancer progresses slowly, so the increase in screening may not affect the death rate for several more years.

Deaths from HIV disease fell by nearly 15% in one year – from 1,419 in 2005 to 1,209 in 2006 – and the toll declined for both sexes and all ethnic groups. Numbers this low have not been seen since 1984, when New York City recorded 952 deaths from AIDS. Researchers attribute the continuing decline to several factors, including a lower infection rate among injecting drug users (thanks in part to syringe exchange programs), increased health services for injecting drug users, a declining population of injecting drug users, expanded HIV testing and referral to care, and slower disease progression among people receiving antiretroviral therapy. HIV mortality is still concentrated among NYC's minority populations, with roughly 34% of HIV deaths occurring among black men and 21% among black women; 11% of HIV deaths occur among white men and 3% among white women.

New HIV diagnoses have recently increased among young men who have sex with men, but the trend has yet to affect mortality rates.

The toll from diabetes fell 6% to 1,708 in 2006, after rising by more than 4% a year earlier, but experts take little comfort in the new number. *Premature* deaths from diabetes (those among people under 65) increased by 6.4% during the same period, reflecting a worsening citywide epidemic. Type-2 diabetes, which is closely tied to obesity, is a leading cause of blindness, amputations, kidney failure and heart attack.

The report charts a 12% drop in deaths from influenza and pneumonia, which together constitute the city's third leading killer. Likely explanations include normal variation and a mild flu season. It is not too late to get a flu vaccination this season. Influenza has yet to have widespread transmission and vaccine is plentiful – call 311 for clinic locations.

Births in New York City, 2006

In 2006, 125,506 babies were born in New York City, an increase of nearly 3,000 over the 2005 total. The 2.3% increase fell short of the 3% rise seen nationally, but it marked the biggest baby boom New York City has seen since 1988. The number of live births to teenagers increased by 1.3%. The Bronx had the highest number of teen births with 2,514 babies – 11.8% of the borough-wide total was born to teenagers. Teen births were less common in the city's other boroughs, accounting for 7% of the total in Brooklyn, 6.1% in Queens, 6% in Staten Island, and 5.8% in Manhattan. The Health Department,

through its Healthy Teens Initiative, is working with health care providers to improve access to contraception and reproductive health care.

The new report shows a continuing decline in the infant mortality rate (the proportion of children who die before their first birthday each year). The citywide rate has fallen by 16.9% in the past 10 years, from 7.1 per 1,000 live births in 1997 to 5.9 in 2006, but that figure masks sharp racial and economic disparities. Black babies remain twice as likely to die in the first year of life as white babies, and in the Bronx, one of the poorest areas in the U.S., the infant mortality rate was 7.1 deaths per 1,000 births in 2006, up from 6.3 in 2005. The national infant mortality rate was 6.8 per 1,000 in 2004, the most recent year on record.

The leading causes of infant mortality, both in New York City and nationally, are birth defects, premature birth and low birth weight. The Health Department is taking steps to reduce infant mortality and address its disparate impact by expanding its Nurse-Family Partnership program, a home-visiting program for low income, first-time mothers; offering home visits to families with new babies in parts of Harlem, Brooklyn and the Bronx; promoting breastfeeding through the Breastfeeding Initiative; providing portable cribs and safe-sleep education through the New York City Safe Sleep Initiative; and supporting access to contraceptive services to help prevent unplanned pregnancies, known to increase the risk of infant mortality.

Other Highlights of the 2006 Vital Statistics Summary

- Heat-related deaths rose from 6 in 2005 to 49 in 2006, the result of two summer heat waves.
- The number of deaths from exposure to cold fell from 16 in 2005 to 9 in 2006.
- Fatal occupational injuries increased from 88 in 2005 to 99 in 2006, attributable to an increase in construction-related injuries. The annual number has hovered near 100 since reporting started in 1996.
- Deaths due to chronic lung disease decreased by 12.3% from 2005 to 2006.
- There were 200 fewer alcohol-attributable deaths in adults aged 20 and older, which decreased 12%, from 1,771 in 2001 to 1,563 in 2006.

Vital Statistics Annual Summaries are now available online as far back as 1961 at:

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/doh/html/vs/vs.shtml>.

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